

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in *Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms* (National Register Bulletin 18). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

1. Name of Property

historic name PRESIDENT

other names/site number River Excursion Boat PRESIDENT, ex CINCINNATI

2. Location

street & number 500 N. Leonor K. Sullivan Boulevard

not for publication

city, town St. Louis

vicinity

state Missouri

code MO

county St. Louis (I.C.)

code

510

zip code 63102

3. Classification

Ownership of Property

- private
 public-local
 public-State
 public-Federal

Category of Property

- building(s)
 district
 site
 structure
 object

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing	Noncontributing
_____	_____ buildings
_____	_____ sites
<u>1</u>	_____ structures
_____	_____ objects
<u>1</u>	_____ Total

Name of related multiple property listing: _____

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. See continuation sheet.

Signature of certifying official _____

Date _____

State or Federal agency and bureau _____

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. See continuation sheet.

Signature of commenting or other official _____

Date _____

State or Federal agency and bureau _____

5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

entered in the National Register.
 See continuation sheet.

determined eligible for the National Register. See continuation sheet.

determined not eligible for the National Register.

removed from the National Register.

other, (explain:) _____

Signature of the Keeper _____

Date of Action _____

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

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Date _____

State or Federal agency and bureau _____

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Date _____

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5. National Park Service Certification

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- entered in the National Register.
 See continuation sheet.
- determined eligible for the National Register. See continuation sheet.
- determined not eligible for the National Register.
- removed from the National Register.
- other, (explain:) _____

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

TRANSPORTATION — water related

RECREATION AND CULTURE — outdoor recreation

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Recreation and Culture

outdoor recreation

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(enter categories from instructions)

N/A

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation N/A

walls N/A

roof N/A

other N/A

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

President was built in 1924 as the steam packetboat Cincinatti of the largest class. In 1933, she was converted into an excursion boat. The superstructure is built of steel, and the rivetted hull is supported by an internal hogging truss system in the modern manner. President's large sidewheels were replaced by three diesel prop units. The original boilers and single cylinder, non-condensing, reciprocating steam engines remain, although no longer connected to sidewheels. Over time she has been modified to meet the requirements of trade and of governmental agencies. All of the original construction survives in the hull and machinery, most of the superstructure is unchanged from the 1933 conversion to an excursion boat. Modifications made for safety and accommodation detract little from her integrity. [1]

Hull

Cincinatti was built of heavy steel plates, double-riveted to steel angle frames. When built she measured 285 feet long, 45.6 feet in beam, and 7.3 feet depth of hold. [2] The hull had a bluff, full bow, a flat bottom with an external keel, and a sharp stern culminating at the rudder. The hull is divided into 34 compartments by the keelson, side keelsons, and several athwartships bulkheads. Steel extensions to the maindeck, called guards, add a great deal of extra deck room beyond the hull.

Boilers

The boiler room occupies the middle section of the hull. The boilers were set into the hull. The four boilers are connected by a single mud drum below and a single steam drum above. The steam drum extends above the main deck. Each cylindrical boiler was fired from the front with No. 4 fuel oil atomized by an air blower when starting cold, or by a steam jet when hot. The fire passed beneath the water to the back of the boiler and returned through flues through the water. Exhaust gasses then passed through uptakes above the fire box, and exited the boat through smokestacks to port and starboard. Steam produced by the boilers was extracted from the steam drum and passed through the main

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steam line overhead to the engine room. The entire assembly is covered by a sheet steel jacket over refractory material covering the boilers. Damage to one boiler from running out of water is visible as a blister on the surface of the crown sheet.

The current boilers are the original set fitted to President. They were moved during the conversion from the main deck to the bottom of the hold. The boiler room is difficult to get to and is little visited today. Two types of instruments indicate the level of water in the boilers. The oldest form of instrument is a vertical row of three small spigots, called test cocks, set into the back of each boiler. The water level is found by opening each one briefly to see whether steam or water comes out. The next oldest type, called a Van Duzen gauge for the inventor, is a clock face gauge activated by a float inside the center boiler. The hull compartments outboard of the boilers are lined with fuel tanks, storage rooms, and shop compartments.

Superstructure

Cincinatti became President in 1933 and was converted to an excursion boat. The conversion replaced the wooden upper decks with steel and changed the deck plans for the new service. The superstructure consists of three decks: the main, on which the propelling machinery is located; the "A" deck above the boilers; "B" deck above that, and the Texas roof with pilothouse atop. Cincinatti was built with an open main deck except for the boilers forward and engines port and starboard. The clear decks were maintained in the conversion and the boilers were placed in the hull for more room. The removable bull rails of a packet were replaced with the permanent wire-screened rails of an excursion boat. The rail screen is decorated with steel flowers applied in a diagonal pattern.

A double steam-powered capstan is set in the middle of the restricted foredeck. The single mast, mounted on the centerline, is surrounded by a steel awning. A series of large glazed sliding doors, surround the fore deck and give access to the interior. Stairways are to port and starboard, fore and aft of the paddleboxes.

Engine Room

The engine room occupies a good deal of the middle of the main deck and contains the engines, rudders, auxiliary machinery, and engine controls. The steam engines are mounted to port and starboard in the engine room on massive steel structural members called cylinder

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timbers. The cylinder timbers are inclined up to the cranks and support the cylinders and crossheads at their inboard ends and the paddlewheel shaft at the after end.

The steam engines are high-pressure, tandem-compound, non-condensing engines. The pistons pushed a heavy crosshead along a slide attached atop the cylinder timbers. The crosshead pushed and pulled the pitman which turns the crank and thus the paddlewheel. The high-pressure cylinders are each 22 inches in diameter and the low pressure cylinders are 40 inches in diameter. They have a common stroke of 9 feet. Each engine developed 1000 Indicated Horsepower. The engines are attached to the paddleshaft cranks but the paddleshafts have been cut off. [8]

The paddlewheels were massive constructions of steel and wood, mounted in enclosed paddleboxes on each quarter of the boat. They were 32 feet in diameter and 12 feet wide and weighed 39 tons. They have been replaced with two Murray and Tregurtha Harbormaster units powered by two 1000 H.P. General Motors diesels. Each unit can be rotated 360 degrees and can be hoisted clear of the water in the wheel houses for maintenance.

All engine room controls were located aft of the generators between the engines. A system of bells, connected to the pilothouse, guided the engineers on duty as to what speed and direction was desired. Today, the Harbormaster units are controlled from the brodge or from the pilothouse. [10]

The steering is controlled from the pilothouse. President is guided by the Harbormaster units working in conjunction with the three rudders. The central rudder is affixed at the usual place on the sternpost and is known as the barndoor for its size. Two other rudders are mounted aft of the paddleboxes.

A and B Decks

When she was built, Cincinatti was given a two level passenger cabin. Both "A" and "B" decks had passenger cabins on each side of the long interior saloon. Cabins opened onto the saloon floor of "A" deck or a balcony around the saloon at the "B" deck level. Stairways were located forward, to port and starboard ahead of the paddlebox and aft in the dining room. Men's and women's restrooms were built just ahead of the paddleboxes.

All passenger cabins were removed during the conversion to an excursion boat. The space where they had been became the two-deck-high Grand

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Salon and ran the length of the superstructure. A bandstand was built against the inboard side of the starboard paddlebox. A 200-foot by 50-foot wooden dance floor occupies the middle of this deck. The dance floor can accommodate more than 1000 dancers or 1500 seated for a concert. The gift stand is located to port, by the stairway, and a concession stand is located aft.

Texas and Skylight Decks

The raised section of deck over the skylights on Western Rivers steamboats was used to build a small group of cabins for officers. On Cincinatti, this cabin area, called the Texas, housed the crew, but as President the area is wider and longer and mostly open to passengers. The Texas deck has ends rounded to match the curve of the lower decks. The pilothouse is located its roof. Small staterooms serve the officers for occasional cruises away from St. Louis. The calliope is located on the starboard side of the Texas.

A small maneuvering bridge is located at the front of the Texas. It extends to the forward face of the superstructure to allow the Captain to view the bow and side when maneuvering. Carbon-arc searchlights of Second World War vintage are mounted at the outboard wings of the extensions. [12]

Pilothouse

The pilothouse is a glass-enclosed house with a flat roof mounted amidships atop the Texas. Engine and rudder controls are located against the center of the forward wall. They consist of throttles, engine angle controls, and the two steering bars. The pilothouse interior holds a raised bench against the back windows. This bench, called the lazy bench, is provided for the comfort of visitors on many Western Rivers boats. The pilothouse is surrounded by sliding windows which can be moved out of the way for clearer visibility. Controls mounted on the ceiling over the windows aim the powerful spot lights used to pick out landmarks used for navigation. The exterior of the pilothouse is simple and unornamented.

Rig

The single mast is stepped forward of the superstructure. It passes through a steel awning over the fore deck and is supported by a flagstaff. Four flagstaffs are located at the edges of the Texas deck and another stands at the stern. Engine exhaust from the diesels is trunked to two pipes above the paddleboxes. These were formerly the

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locations of the steam 'scape pipes from the steam engines. Western Rivers steamboats use high pressure steam which is exhausted to the atmosphere rather than reused by a condenser. [13]

Boiler exhaust traveled up from the boilers on two sides and out of the boat through two stubby smokestacks. When the boat was new she had tall simple stacks with a single spreader. The stacks were shortened for operation under the low Eads Bridge at St. Louis. [14]

Notes

- 1
Alan L. Bates, The Western Rivers Steamboat Cyclopoedium (Leonia, New Jersey: Hustle Press, 1968) passim.
- 2
Frederick Way, Jr., Way's Packet Directory; 1848-1983 (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University, 1983) p. 222.
- 3
Alan L. Bates, "Idlewild - Avalon - Belle Of Louisville" (Blueprint plans, Louisville, Kentucky: Alan L. Bates. N.D.) p.8.
- 4
Bates, Steamboat Cyclopoedium, pp.22-30.
- 5
For details of construction when built and appearance of bull rails see Photo No. 1.
- 6
David Tschiggare, "Belle of Louisville Steams On" Steamboat Bill (No. 102, Summer, 1967) pp. 67-69, and Bates, Steamboat Cyclopoedium, pp.41-44, and United States Coast Guard, Certificate of Inspection (Washington, D.C.: issued April 1, 1987) p. 2.
- 7
Reports and Documents upon the subject of The Explosions of Steamboat Boilers (Washington, D.C.: Duff Green, 1833) passim.

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8 James H. Rees, James Rees & Sons Company, Illustrated Catalog
Pittsburgh: N.P., 1913) pp.30-31.

9 Bates, Steamboat Cyclopoedum, pp.92-97.

10 United States Coast Guard, op. cit., p.1.

11 Bates, Steamboat Cyclopoedum, pp.36-39.

12 Bates, "Idlewild - Avalon - Belle Of Louisville".

13 Bates, Steamboat Cyclopoedum, pp. 80-84.

14 For details of rig and ornament see photos and Tschiggfre,
op.cit. pp. 67-69.

8. Statement of Significance

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

nationally statewide locally

Applicable National Register Criteria A B C D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions) A B C D E F G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)

Period of Significance

Significant Dates

Maritime History

1924 - 1978

1924, 1933, 1978

Engineering

Social History

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

NHLXII L: Business: Shipping and Transportation

Significant Person

N/A

Architect/Builder

Midland Barge Company

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

SIGNIFICANCE

The sidewheel river excursion steamboat President, an operating vessel on the Upper Mississippi River, is the only remaining large Western Rivers sidewheel excursion boat. [1] Such boats carried passengers on day outings, providing entertainment, and pleasant diversion. The Louisville and Cincinnati Packet Company ordered the boat, marine Architect Tom Dunbar designed her, and Midland Barge Company of Midland, Kentucky, built her. When she was built in 1924, as Cincinnati, the boat was one of the last overnight packet boats, operating between Cincinnati and Louisville with occasional trips to New Orleans or Pittsburgh. After her sale to the Streckfus Steamer Company in 1929, she operated briefly as a packet. She was then laid up until 1932 when she was converted to become the largest excursion boat in America. Cincinnati was renamed President and went tramping over much of the Western Rivers system for excursion business. Today, President is a very popular attraction on the St. Louis waterfront carrying excursion charters, educational tours, and promotional tour groups on day and night trips down the Upper Mississippi River.

The preceding statement of significance is based on the more detailed statements that follow.

The Development of Western Rivers Watercraft

The Western Rivers system, composed of the Mississippi, Ohio, Missouri and other tributary rivers, carried most of the immigrants and freight that settled the Midwest. Starting in the late 1700s, most settlers travelled from the East Coast overland to Pittsburgh, Wheeling, or Redstone and then down the Ohio River to points west. [2] Only a small number traveled north from New Orleans and southern regions using the Mississippi and other rivers running from the North.

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To reach the new lands of the West, Europeans adapted boat types already in use by Native Americans and on the East Coast. Explorers used birch bark canoes and settlers used larger dugouts to open the west to settlement. As more people moved west, boats with greater capacity were needed, which called for new boat types. A form of enlarged dugout, called a pirogue, was developed first. Pirogues were more capacious than dugouts and were themselves adapted into more useful forms. The first adaptation changed the method of construction, by taking the well-formed hull shape of the pirogue and replacing the hewn multiple-log construction of pirogues with European plank-on-frame construction. [3]

Plank-on-frame construction was also used for another boat type called a bateau. Bateaus had been adapted for frontier use on the eastern seaboard in the early 1700s and were built for use on the Western Rivers later. When more traditional European construction practice was followed with these vessels, they resembled ship's boats but with more substantial timbers. When the best features of pirogues and bateaus were combined, they were given a hull shape that provided little resistance to the water, an external keel to help in steering, and sufficient cargo capacity to pay their way. This new type was called a keelboat. [4]

Keelboats were the most developed form of watercraft on the river and were used for rapid transportation of passengers and high value freight. Keelboats were usually 40-80 feet long and 7-10 feet broad. They possessed a well-modelled form, and could be propelled about 15 miles a day, by either oars at the bow or by poles pushed by the crew walking along a footway at each side. A single steersman stood atop a block at the stern to guide the keelboat using a long steering oar. Some keelboats which sailed an advertised route on a regular schedule came to be known as packets, the deep water term for vessels in such service. [5]

Cheaper transportation was afforded by the use of barges and flatboats. Flatboats were box-shaped variants of the scow hull form used for ferries on shallow Eastern rivers. Flatboats were the cheapest form of transportation on the rivers. Intended to travel only one way and then be broken up for lumber, flatboats could be built, loaded with household goods, and sailed by the settlers themselves. [6]

Barges occupied the middle range of watercraft between keelboats and flatboats. Though similar in construction to keelboats, barges were

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built wider, more robust, and drew more water. Barges transported heavy freight on the deeper rivers. [7]

Development of the Western Rivers Steamboat

Robert Fulton built the steamboat New Orleans at Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, in 1811, and started a revolution which changed the pattern of commerce on the rivers. She proceeded down the Ohio and Mississippi rivers to her namesake city attracting publicity and attention along the way. The advent of steam propulsion on the Western Rivers revolutionized river transportation. Steamboats would provide convenient, inexpensive transportation and greatly facilitate the opening of the continent to settlement. New Orleans, and the boats which were built on her pattern, were powered versions of canal boats. Their long, narrow, deep hulls were better suited to deep eastern rivers than the shallow Mississippi, but were needed to support heavy steam machinery. Another sort of boat was required, but several design problems had to be overcome before steamboats could be a success on the Western Rivers. [7]

To navigate on the shallow rivers of the West, steamboat hulls and machinery had to be made as light as possible. Machinery weight problems were solved first. A light weight, high-pressure engine was employed to propel a small boat, called Comet, in 1813. The powerplant was further refined in 1816 by Henry Shreve, who put the boilers on deck and designed a new type of engine to distribute machinery weights out over a large area of hull. Shreve's new engine design used a direct-acting, horizontal, high-pressure engine to drive the paddlewheel propeller. The second design problem was overcome over time. Lightweight hull construction gradually replaced earlier robust "canal boat" construction and a broad, shallow-draft, hull form, using a truss rod system rather than heavy wooden beams, was developed over time.

Two basic engine machinery arrangements were adapted to propel the paddlewheels of steamboats. One placed the propelling wheel overhanging the stern of the boat and was called a sternwheel. The other placed a wheel on each side of the hull and was known as a sidewheel. Each arrangement had advantages not possessed by the other. Sidewheelers were generally faster and more maneuverable while sternwheelers were more powerful and less liable to breakdown or damage from touching bottom or a snag.

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To succeed in business, these lightly built boats had to carry a large amount of freight and many passengers. In answer to this requirement, sponsons were built over each side of the hull to extend the deck area and the superstructure was extended several decks above the boiler deck to support passenger cabins.

All of the essential elements of the Western Rivers steamboat were present by 1825. Broad, shallow-draft, vessels with boilers and engines on deck, side or sternwheels for propulsion, and cabins built on lightweight decks above the freight and machinery-laden maindeck, soon appeared on every tributary of the Mississippi. The ease and economy of this service caused the value of goods reaching New Orleans to double every ten years from 1820 to 1860. [8]

One feature of cardinal concern in the development of Western Rivers steamboats was safety. Early boats were particularly susceptible to boiler explosions, fires, and sinkings caused by hitting snags. Extraordinary dangers included being damaged in floods, tornadoes, and ice gorges. The lifetime of a steamboat in the 1840s and 1850s was estimated to be below five years. This situation changed very slowly.

Safety eventually won out over speed and economy in vessel design when progress was forced by government intervention rather than by economic considerations. In 1838, Congress responded to the need for increased safety aboard steamboats when they passed an act requiring the inspection of steamboats. In 1851, six steamboat disasters took over 700 lives and caused Congress to tighten these safety regulations. This act, the Steamboat Inspection Act of 1852, set standards for both boats and operators, and created a system of Federal inspection to oversee them. [9]

Hazards to navigation did not deter business and new boats were built to replace those lost to various causes. A substantial salvage business grew up in consequence, and parts produced for one steamboat might be reused on a succession of later boats.

As time progressed, steamboat designs began to diversify to meet the needs of various trades and routes. Various features of advantage to a particular trade or route were accentuated in vessels built for them. Passenger vessels required high speed and high-class accommodations. Ferries called for wide stable hulls. Package freighters required dependable engines and robust construction as they carried heavy cargo on deck or in barges alongside. In some services speed came to be of paramount importance even surpassing safety concerns. Faster vessels

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required fine lines, powerful engines, and multiple boilers to supply plenty of steam. [10]

Shallow tributary rivers such as the Missouri and the upper regions of other rivers required boats with exceptionally shoal draft. Bertrand, sunk in 1865 on the Missouri River, drew only 18 inches when light. To operate in such shallow water steamboats had to sacrifice all unnecessary weight and be satisfied with minimal superstructures. [11]

By 1880, though a depression in river trade had hurt steamboat companies, there continued to be advances in riverboat technology. Several distinct types of steamboats had been developed for work on the Western Rivers. Passengers were carried on riverboats of any kind from time to time but several types were particularly adapted for passenger service. The most elaborate of these were saloon or palace steamers providing luxury passenger transportation in elegant cabins. Such boats usually ran on schedule, and often carried mail to designated ports. These services duplicated those of ocean-going packet companies and these boats were aptly termed packets. [12]

Other passenger vessels were adapted for short day excursions carrying groups and charters to nearby scenic areas and for cruises to nowhere. These excursion boats were usually large sidewheelers operating from large port towns, but smaller boats also made occasional trips on the rivers "tramping" for charters.

More mundane sisters to the packets operated carrying passengers and cargo, wherever it could be found. Such non-scheduled steamboats often pushed one or more barges to increase cargo capacity. These barges were of two general types. The more common type was a long narrow scow hull built of planks and used on one-way trips down river carrying coal. This type was generally developed from the flatboat. When they were unloaded they were broken up and sold as lumber. The other type of barge was used for voyages both up and down stream. These were usually greatly enlarged versions of the barges of the 1820s called "model" barges, for their finely modeled ends. Over time a separate type developed that was adapted just to tow barges. [13]

Towboats were designed to act as floating engines to propel barges. Only the barge was detained while loading or unloading cargo, and not the expensive towboat. Towboats have straight sides and ends to ease tying off to a string of barges. Strings of up to 60 barges were pushed on occasion but 15 barges has been the more usual number because of the limited size of river locks. [14]

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Some passenger boats were adapted to carry vehicles and livestock across the river or for short distances up or downstream. These boats were of two general types; ferries and day packets. Ferries were more heavily built than day packets. Western Rivers ferries were unlike ferries in most other regions of the country. Vehicles entered the main deck from the sides rather than the ends of the boat because swift currents forced the ferry to always land with the bow upstream. [15]

Day packets were faster and designed to provide better accommodations than ferries so that they could be used for occasional excursion trips. This adaptability allowed day packets to survive when bridge construction put ordinary ferries out of business.

Construction and Career of Cincinnati

The Louisville and Cincinnati Packet Company was the oldest steamboat company on the Western Rivers in 1923. The owners ordered two steam-propelled sidewheel packet boats to be completed in 1924. The cost for each was \$417,000. They were the most expensive and luxurious packets constructed to that day. Only the California sternwheelers Delta Queen and Delta King at \$875,000 each surpassed them.

The company ordered the hulls from Midland Barge Company in Midland, Pennsylvania. They planned to finish the engine installation and superstructure work at Cincinnati. Finances were strained before the superstructure construction began. The hull of one of the two sisters was sold to the Coney Island Company of Cincinnati and completed as the excursion steamer Island Queen. The other boat was completed as planned by February 25, 1924 and was named Cincinnati. Her first trip was a grand excursion to New Orleans for Mardi Gras. The trip was a financial success. [16]

The Mardi Gras trip continued to be a success every year. Cincinnati followed the Mardi Gras trip with packet service in the summer between Louisville and Cincinnati, and occasionally with excursion charters. Cincinnati was also called on for extraordinary services because of her position as the grandest boat on the Western Rivers.

One notable instance of extraordinary service she performed was to carry the entire Ohio Valley Improvement Association membership during the dedication of Ohio River Locks and Dams 30, 32, and 36 in 1925. Four years later, in 1929, she performed a similar service when the canalization of the Ohio River was completed. A grand parade of riverboats, led by Cincinnati as flagship, left Pittsburgh,

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Pennsylvania, on October 17, and arrived at Cairo, Illinois, on October 25. President Herbert C. Hoover and members of his cabinet cruised aboard during part of the celebration. [17]

Deluxe packetboats were expensive to run and Cincinnati was the last to operate on the Western Rivers. Smaller, less expensive, packets lasted a while longer. The Louisville & Cincinnati Packet Company could not afford the large, expensive vessel after 1932 and sold her in 1933 to Streckfus Steamers of St. Louis, Missouri.

Streckfus Steamboat Company

Streckfus Steamers was founded in 1891 by Capt. John Streckfus with a single sternwheel packet freighter named Freddie. The boat operated in the quad-cities area of the upper Mississippi. Starting with Freddie, Captain Streckfus bought a number of old packets and rebuilt them to serve new trades. The First World War period encouraged the transition from packet service to excursion business, and Streckfus rebuilt old boats to adapt them to the new conditions. The line remained successful and the Streckfus fleet grew to become the largest excursion boat business in the world by the 1940s. [18]

Conversion to President

The new owners of Cincinnati, Streckfus Steamers, moved her base of operations away from competition in Ohio to St. Louis. The next year they rebuilt the packet as an excursion boat. Tougher safety requirements encouraged Streckfus to rebuild the entire superstructure of steel. The boilers were moved from the main deck to new positions in the hull belowdecks. The boat was stripped and rebuilt from the hull up. The new superstructure took the same general form as the old but replaced two decks of cabins with a two-deck high Grand Salon (ballroom). A band stand was placed to one side of a large wooden dancefloor. Art Moderne ornamentation and styling replaced the Victorian Steamboat Gothic of Cincinnati. Streckfus Steamers renamed the boat President and advertised her as "the New 5 Deck Luxury Super Steamer, Biggest and Finest On The Upper Mississippi."

Advertisements for the boat proclaimed her "The Wonder Ship of the Mississippi--where life is gay, vivacious--alive with exciting thrills--with dancing and romancing... the ultimate in excursion pleasure." [19]

President went tramping during the majority of the year and traveled to New Orleans for the winter months when low water and cold weather made

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operation difficult. Tramping took the vessel north as the winter ended and warm weather moved north. By August the boat had travelled upriver to St. Paul and then gradually worked her way back south again. Streckfus operated the boat as part of a fleet, keeping the boats employed in different regions except during the winter when many boats from the upper river converged on New Orleans.

Entertainment history

Riverboats of various types carried new musical styles and entertainers throughout the midwest. Minstrel shows first became popular through exposure to large audiences aboard showboats in the 1850s. Later, dixieland and jazz were introduced to huge areas of the country by packetboat bands. Louis Armstrong worked between 1918 and 1922 aboard the Streckfus steamers Sidney and Capitol on the upper river. Many famous big bands played aboard riverboats because boats held as many patrons as most clubs, music halls, and ballrooms ashore.

President often carried the Sidney Divigne Band from New Orleans for tramping trips up the river to St. Louis. At some cities the band was exchanged for a local band. At St. Louis the Clyde McCoy Band, known for the "Sugar Blues," came on board. The A.J. Piron Band, Alvin Alcorn, and Danny Barker all played aboard at various times. Louis Armstrong appeared aboard President at the height of his fame with the Sidney Divigne Band.

Not all passengers came aboard for the music and dancing. The Grand Salon was kept clear of encumbrances to allow river breezes free play about the dance floor. River cruises were "the easiest way to get cooled off" for city dwellers beleaguered by heat in the days before air-conditioning. [20]

Changes

The Second World War brought changes in the style of operation of President. Fuel oil was restricted and many of the young crewmen left the boat to enter the armed services. Tramping was discontinued and day and night cruises were made near New Orleans. When the war ended President remained in New Orleans as a popular night spot. The Grand Salon was enclosed by windows and the superstructure interior air conditioned when the boat had to stay in the hot southern climate all year. Thanks to engineering, the river still offered a cool refreshing escape from the city.

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The mode of propulsion was changed in 1978. The great length and huge area presented to the wind by President made her difficult to maneuver, even with independent sidewheels. The sidewheels were removed and replaced by 1000 horsepower diesel engines powering three Murray and Tregurtha Harbormanster units. These resemble giant outboard engines, and can be turned 360 degrees. The new propulsion units made the boat much safer and fit unobtrusively into the wheelhouses. The boilers and steam engines were retained but no longer operate. Safety and continued operation of the boat were assured with minimum damage to integrity. [21]

President returned to St. Louis as her homeport in 1985 after an extensive refit at Baton Rouge, Louisiana. The ownership changed to a subsidiary of Streckfus steamers, St. Louis River Cruise Lines, Inc., that same year. Morning and afternoon cruises were offered for several years before returning to the popular evening starlight cruises. [22]

Today, President, plays an important part in the cultural and historical heritage of the City of St. Louis and the entire region, where she is well known and regarded. President is also of great importance as the only remaining example of her type, which played an important part in America's maritime and entertainment history.

Notes

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- 16
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1979) p. 1.

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19
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20
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Hawley, June 29, 1989.

21
Way, Packet Directory pp. ; and Passenger Traffic Department, "All
Hail, the S.S. President" The Scenic Water Way: Streckfus Line Magazine
(St. Louis, Missouri: Streckfus Steamers, Inc., 1933).

22
John M. McGuire, "The Return of the President" St. Louis Post-Dispatch
Sunday Magazine (St. Louis, Missouri, June 30, 1985) pp. 14-15.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

See continuation sheet

Primary location of additional data:

- State historic preservation office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Specify repository: _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of property _____

UTM References

A

1	5	7	4	6	8	1	0	4	2	7	8	3	5	0
Zone			Easting				Northing							

B

Zone			Easting				Northing							

C

Zone			Easting				Northing							

D

Zone			Easting				Northing							

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

All that area encompassed within the extreme length, beam, and draft of the vessel.

See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

The boundary incorporates the entire area of the vessel.

See continuation sheet

11. Form Prepared By

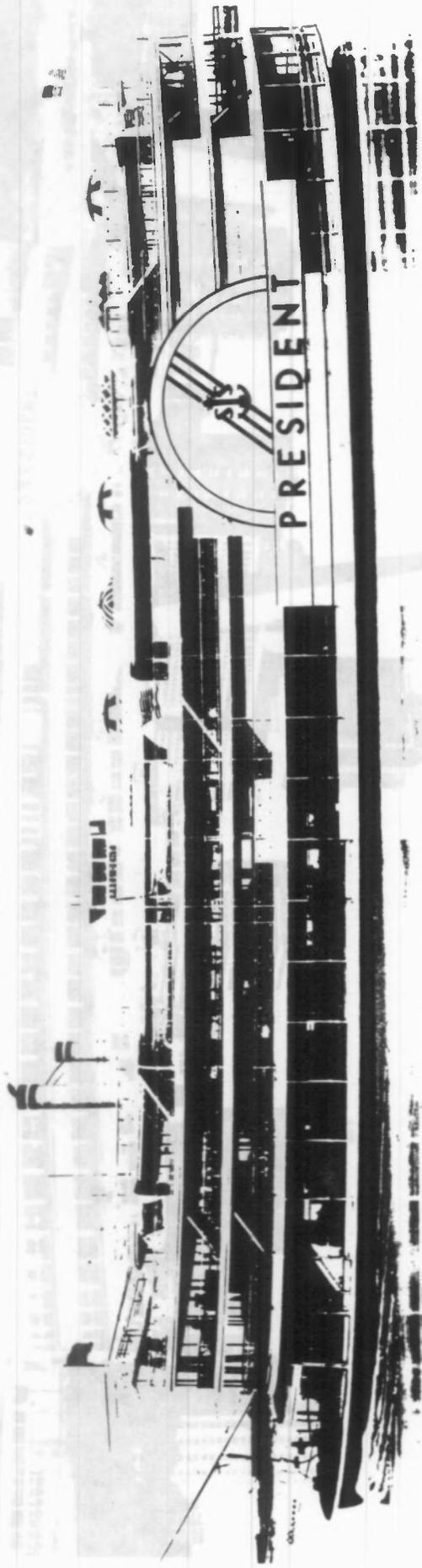
name/title Kevin J. Foster/Historian
organization National Park Service (418) date July 10, 1989
street & number P.O. Box 37127 telephone 202-343-9508
city or town Washington state DC zip code 20013-7127

N-42-77-50
T. 7. 46. 810

STATE OF MISSOURI
GEOLOGICAL SURVEY AND WATER RESOURCES

STATE OF ILLINOIS
DEPARTMENT OF REGISTRATION AND EDUCATION
GEOLOGICAL SURVEY DIVISION





PRESIDENT
ST. LOUIS, MISSOURI
Owner: GATEWAY RIVERBOAT CRUISES
Broadside view underway, retouched
publicity photo
Photo # 1 by UNKNOWN, 1934
Courtesy of: GATEWAY RIVERBOAT CRUISES

ST. LOUIS, MISSOURI
GATEWAY RIVERBOAT CRUISES
1989
PHOTO # 2
UNKNOWN



PRESIDENT
ST. LOUIS, MISSOURI
Owner: GATEWAY RIVERBOAT CRUISES
Port: broadside view underway
Photo # 2 by UNKNOWN, 1989



PRESIDENT
ST. LOUIS, MISSOURI
Owner: GATEWAY RIVERBOAT CRUISES
Top deck, looking aft toward pilothouse
Photo # 3 by KEVIN J. FOSTER, 1989
Courtesy of: NATIONAL PARK SERVICE